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Military Developments 30 Sep 75

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Military Developments

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USSR: Conflict Over Space Program

Since the joint US-USSR manned space flight last July, Soviet officials have stressed publicly that they will continue to give high priority to their manned research program. These statements are probably accurate, but there is some evidence of dissent within the Soviet scientific hierarchy.

Ronald Sagdeyev, Director of the Institute of Space Research since August 1973, has stated publicly that he is unalterably opposed to manned research. He wields a great deal of power within the scientific community and has successfully manipulated international meetings and is planning to purge the Institute of many of his opponents, including many favoring manned research. He has also suggested that his Institute "boycott" the military by refusing to provide experiments for their spacecraft until the manned-versus-unmanned conflict is resolved.

Although Sagdeyev has considerable influence within the scientific community, he probably is not able to influence greatly the decision-making levels. He has advanced to his current position through his skill at presenting his ideas to those in authority. If he is able to develop a stronger voice in political circles, he may exert a negative influence on the Soviet manned space program in the future.

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UNITED KINGDOM: Designing New "Mini-Carrier"

The US defense attache in London reports that British industry recently completed design work for a mini-carrier that is not much larger than a modern frigate. The ship, designed by Vosper Thornycroft in consultation with Hawker Siddeley Aviation, would be capable of carrying up to eight Sea King ASW helicopters or eight Harrier V/STOL attack aircraft. It would have an overall length of 450

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feet, a displacement of 6,000 tons, and a complement of only 250 officers and men. The ship would be armed with three twin 40mm guns.

The navy apparently has yet to express its views on the carrier, but the proposal is likely to arouse interest in Whitehall, which is looking for ways to reduce defense spending. A British defense correspondent estimated the mini-carrier would cost only one-half to one-third as much as Britain's new "through-deck" ASW cruiser. The mini-carrier would also appear to have good export potential to countries with smaller navies interested in having a limited amount of air power at sea.

The navy has asked for three of the larger through-deck cruisers, but the government has committed itself to building only one of these 20,000 ton ships. These cruisers--which look similar to small carriers--would be used as command ships, operating as part of task forces containing destroyers and frigates. Each of the cruisers is designed to carry about 9 Sea King helicopters and 5 Harriers, and would be armed with Exocet anti-ship and Sea Dart surface-to-air missiles. Even though the mini-carrier would be less capable and more lightly armed, financial realities could force the British navy to cancel the other two ASW cruisers and build the smaller carriers instead.

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AUSTRALIA: To Train Papua-New Guinea Defense Forces

According to Australian press reports, Australia will take a more active role in training the defense forces of Papua-New Guinea, which gained its independence on September 16. Formerly a trust territory of Australia, the new nation shares half of the island of New Guinea with the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, and is located nearly 400 miles northeast of the Australian province of Queensland.

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Papua-New Guinea has virtually no military forces and has only a limited capacity to maintain internal security. Canberra, however, has turned over to Port Moresby army and air force battalions composed of Papua-New Guineans that had been serving with the Australian armed forces. These will form the nucleus of the new nation's self-defense force along with technicians and military advisers Australia will probably continue to provide for some time.

The Australian Ministry of Defense has also given the Papua-New Guinea's fledgling air transport squadron two DC-3s, and will give it two more by the end of this year or in early 1976. The Royal Australian Air Force already has trained five Papua-New Guinea Defense Force (PNGDF) pilots, and there are plans to begin the training of ground crews and technical personnel. The air transport squadron will initially consist of 25 RAAF personnel, including the commanding officer and technical specialist, 11 PNGDF personnel, and three PNG civilians.

Papua-New Guinea Minister of Defense, Albert Maori Kiki, in a speech last year before the Papua-New Guinea House of Assembly, gave a brief outline of the future government's plans for upgrading the defense forces. According to Kiki, the PNGDF would have a ceiling of 3,500 men--including two infantry battalions, an engineer company, a patrol boat squadron and an amphibious landing craft squadron--together with the appropriate support facilities. Port Moresby is in the process of expanding the airfield at Nazab to enable it to accommodate medium size jets, such as the BAC 111 and the F-28.

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